

WANTED: TRAINING COMPETENCIES FOR THE 21st CENTURY

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this research paper is to describe the results and implications of the training professionals' competencies in the hospitality industry in the United States.

Design/methodology/approach

A qualitative implicit method, in-depth interviews using pictures were conducted with ten training professionals, where metaphors were widely used and links between concepts were identified. The qualitative software Atlas ti was used in creating a consensus map; a display showing the required competencies of training professionals in hospitality.

Findings

The training competencies that resulted from the current study and are imperative for the effectiveness of training and development are (1) teamwork, (2) inspiration-motivation, (3) creativity, (4) mentoring, (5) keeping current, (6) proactiveness, (7) active listening, (8) staying healthy, (9) training measurement, (10) consistency, and (11) love and passion for the profession.

Research limitations/implications

In-depth interviews using pictures is an implicit research technique that attempts to reveal the unconscious thoughts and opinions of training professionals. The study took place in Las Vegas, Nevada, a unique tourist destination, and the interviewees were employed by large hotel-casino corporations. Future studies need to research different sizes of hospitality institutions and different tourist destinations.

Practical implications

Human resources management can use the outcome of the study as a guide for compiling competency-based job analyses for training positions, and consequently recruit and appraise training professionals based on these job specifications. Moreover, the outcome of the paper can be proven beneficial not only for hospitality executives, and future and current training professionals, but also for educators since training and teaching showcase many similarities.

Social implications

Improved and efficient training will result in lower employee turnover since employees will rate higher in job satisfaction and consequently that will result in better customer service and returning business for the company; a win-win situation for all involved stakeholders in a hospitality company.

Originality/value

Both hospitality executives, and future and current training professionals should find these research results most interesting as they reveal the necessary competencies that will enable them in best training and developing hospitality employees.

Keywords: Human resource development, Hospitality education, training & development, Hospitality, Competencies, Training

Category: Research Paper

INTRODUCTION

Billions of dollars are spent yearly on employee training. Overall, American companies spent approximately \$129.6 billion dollars in 2006 on employees training and development (Training becoming more high-tech, 2008). In fact, U.S. organizations today spend on average \$1,850 per year, per employee, on training. (Saranow, 2006; Ruiz, 2006). This represents a potentially significant amount of resources for organizations. For instance, this means that a company with 100 employees will spend, on average, about \$185,000 per year for training, while a company with 1,000 employees spends approximately \$1.85 million dollars per year.

Training costs in the hospitality industry can be even more staggering. With an average turnover of hourly employees in 2005 of 102% for employees and 33% for managers, the training costs can explode significantly (Popp, 2006; Watkins, 2006). Additionally, since high turnover is significantly related to decreased hotel profits (Tracey and Hinkin, 2008), reducing turnover can also be a method for improving profitability (Simons and

Hinkin, 2001; Woods and Macaulay, 1989). In addition, others have contended that the amount and quality of training is also directly related to turnover (Berta, 2006). In fact, Mullen (2004) noted that 70% of exiting employees would stay if they were developed and nurtured by their companies. From these studies we can assume that better training results in lower turnover rates and more profits.

The facts presented above indicate the importance of training in the hotel industry. However, not all training dollars are well spent. Research has shown that employees are more responsive to some types of training than to others (Tan et al., 2003). Thus, it is imperative to study the necessary competencies training professionals must demonstrate to perform training that is perceived as effective by employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competencies

The literature reveals three distinct perspectives in competency theory: competencies as individual characteristics; competencies as characteristics of organizations; and the notion of competencies as a tool to facilitate and structure communication between education and the labor market (Boon and Van der Klink, 2001; Garavan and McGuire, 2001).

The present study will focus on the first or individual level of competencies that is related to characteristics of individuals. Competencies are demonstrable characteristics of a

person that enable performance, and they entail knowledge, skills, and behaviors that facilitate employees to efficiently perform (Dessler, 2009).

There is some discussion about whether these characteristics are innate or can be learned. The dominant view emphasizes the trainability of competencies and the potential contribution of the workplace in developing them (Eraut, 1994; Fletcher, 1992; Garavan and McGuire, 2001). A more traditional view underscores the inherent character of competencies, where emotion, attitude and cognition derive from innate abilities and thus cannot be learned (Garavan and McGuire, 2001).

McClelland (1973) is credited with initiating the study of the importance of competencies. Prior to McClelland's work, most management scholars related outcomes primarily to intelligence. Since then, many scholars, including Boyatzis (1982), Spencer and Spencer (1993) and others have applied the study of competencies to organizational outcomes (Jia and Fun, 2008).

According to Dessler (2009), job competencies are observable and measurable behaviors comprising part of a job that facilitate the identification of the skills that employees need to be effective in a certain position. Industry has embraced this notion as 75% of American companies have implemented the competency concept into human resource management practices to achieve improved performance (Schippmann et al., 2000).

In hospitality, four major management competency studies were published between 1988 and 2000 that were based on Sandwith's competency-domain model. This model includes

five areas; conceptual-creative, leadership, interpersonal, administrative and technical.

The conceptual/creative aspect of this domain refers to adapting creatively to change. The leadership domain includes skills such as successfully managing attention, meaning and trust. Typically, a successful leader empowers subordinates, and is a role model of enthusiasm, competence and diligence. Interpersonal competencies include skills which allow them to effectively interact with others.

The technical domain refers to knowledge and skills associated with the production or service. Administrative competencies are similar to technical competencies, although there is a difference in scope. While technical training can be developed within each department, administrative training concerns the entire organization. (Sandwith, 1993).

The Sandwith model for exploring competencies is significant as it broke with the traditional approach of studying competencies based on specific jobs, job-specific analysis and person assessments (Clardy, 2007).

Tas (1988) studied the general manager-trainee competencies from a hotel-industry perspective. Okeiyi's team (Okeiyi et al., 1994) examined the entry-level food and beverage competencies from the point of view of educators, employers and students, and Tas and his colleagues (Tas et al., 1996) studied the required management competencies from the employer's perspective. All three studies concluded that interpersonal and leadership competencies are essential for managerial success in hospitality (Kay and Roussette, 2000).

The Kay and Roussette (2000) study, which surveyed managers and directors from food and beverage, front desk, and sales departments in hotels, concluded that in addition to leadership and interpersonal skills, technical skills were the second most important set of competencies. Leadership was rated first while interpersonal competencies were rated third most important. Leadership competencies included recognizing customer problems, portraying enthusiasm, maintaining professional and ethical standards and cultivating a climate of trust. Technical competencies incorporated working knowledge of product-service, interpersonal included listening skills and other face to face communication skills and conceptual referred to adapting creativity to change (Kay and Roussette, 2000).

Training

There are several trainers' manuals in the management literature that describe important training competencies and propose designing and delivering effective training. Efficient active listening, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills are emphasized in these manuals (Pont, 1996). Rae (2002) based her research on the findings of Burgoyne and Stuart (1976) and concluded that planned education and training play an important role in the development of managerial skills and performance. Among the training competencies that were important to trainers, Rae (2002) recommended, organizational knowledge, knowledge of management roles and functions (responsibilities and authority), training knowledge, program preparation skills, technological skills, people skills, commitment to training and development of people, creativity to increase effectiveness by using different ways of disseminating information, self-development, humor, and self-confidence. Leigh (2006) struck a similar chord in highly encouraging trainers to be enthusiastic about their

job, noting that enthusiasm is a prerequisite for success in any field because of its positive impact on the reaction of trainees.

There are not many studies focused on required training competencies in the hospitality industry. Costello (1997) noted that flexibility and patience were important competencies for a trainer, since every employee was unique and had a different learning style. Costello also noted that an efficient trainer needed to coach individually each employee to achieve the highest level of performance. Sandra Gorman, a recipient of the Education and Training Award in Ireland emphasized good communication skills, flexibility, enthusiasm, passion and pride, as important ingredients of training (Lalaguna, 2007).

While extensive research has been conducted on designing and conducting training sessions, and on why training is important to the advancement of organizations (Mullen, 2004; Pont, 1996) little has been conducted on the actual facilitators and providers of the training. This research attempts to fill that void by identifying competencies needed by training professionals. This is accomplished through an examination of the insights and beliefs of the training professionals about the important competencies they must exhibit in order to assure both excellent performance and effective training costs. Hence, the research question attempts to determine the required competencies in the hospitality training department from the employee point of view.

In-Depth Interviewing Using Pictures

Qualitative research uses inductive strategies. Researchers based this study on the ontological assumption that reality is both subjective and multiple. Since each person may perceive reality somewhat differently, analyzing the perspectives of participants (seen in the quotes and themes of discussion) can yield information useful in constructing an understanding of how each has perceived reality. In-depth interviewing was used in this study as a means to obtaining greater depth of information. (Flick, 2006; Merriam, 1998).

Explicit measures allow participants to think about their evaluative response, and to respond in any way, using their conscious mind. Implicit measures minimize controlled thought from participants. Only about 5% of cognition is conscious while 95% occurs below the level of awareness (Zaltman, 2003). Thus, participants in an explicit research approach (surveys, focus groups etc...), cannot readily articulate many important thoughts. In addition, they only reveal information they want to reveal, especially on sensitive topics of inquiry (Zaltman and Zaltman, 2008). Furthermore, in many cases they will not consciously know the answers to questions posed. In explicit research, it is not unusual for the participants' attitude, recorded by the researcher, to be different from their behavior (Latour, 2004). For these reasons this study uses a qualitative, implicit method of data collection; in-depth interviewing using pictures.

Researchers from various disciplines have developed different devices for mining the unconscious mind in order to create real value for participants. McClelland (1973) used pictures in his Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). He was particularly interested in

studying the impact of achievement, affiliation and influence on performance. The TAT consists of showing individuals a series of pictures and asking them to give brief descriptions of what is happening in the pictures. The responses are analyzed in terms of the presence or absence of certain themes such as achievement, affiliation, and influence. According to McClelland, regardless of gender or culture, people are driven by those three motives that are discovered implicitly through the analysis of metaphors (Epstein, 1994; Fine and Lockwood, 1986; Ratzburg, 2003).

The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique's (ZMET) device also involves metaphors. Metaphors populate every aspect of human life, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, language or other differences (Zaltman and Zaltman, 2008). For instance, by inviting consumers to use metaphors as they talk about a product or service, ZMET researchers bring unconscious thoughts and feelings to a level of awareness where both parties can explore them more openly together. However, metaphors can hide as well as reveal thoughts and feelings. (Zaltman, 2003).

ZMET is based, in part, on the fact that most human communication is visual and non-verbal. The ZMET method assumes that people think in pictures that evoke emotions. ZMET findings are also consistent with research showing that people use sensory experiences to make decisions and to express abstract ideas. This indicates that sensory images are important media of communication (Olson Zaltman Associates, 2008). The ZMET technique has been used in disciplines such as psychology and tourism but it is most widely used in marketing. Several corporations, including Coca Cola, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Toyota, and General Mills use this method to understand the mental

models underlying customer and manager thinking and behavior (Chen, 2008; Lee et al., 2003; Olson Zaltman Associates, 2008; Piercy et al., 2005). A one hour one-on-one ZMET interview can produce the same number of ideas as one focus group involving a total of eight people (Zaltman, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Based on Zaltman's Metaphor Elicitation technique of picture analysis, an in-depth interview process using pictures was performed with 10 training professionals from two hotel-casinos in Las Vegas, Nevada, averaging 2,600 rooms each property. Both properties were members of two mega hotel-casino corporations. The sample included participants that occupied both management and non-management positions since, in some cases, training is delivered by both managers and training coordinators.

Five participants (one human resources' training manager and four training and development coordinators) worked for a new casino property near completion and opening. The remaining participants came from an off-the Strip Las Vegas hotel casino. Among this second group of participants were a hotel division training manager, two food and beverage training managers, a housekeeping training manager and a reservation training coordinator. Participants in this research were experts in their field, and they represented both genders, a variety of years of experience in the field of hospitality, and a

range of different training responsibilities. A complete description of the participants' demographics is depicted in Table I.

Ten days before the day of the interview, participants were notified to collect three to ten pictures that described their opinions and impressions about their roles in hospitality. To prepare for the interview, the participants spent a considerable amount of time both thinking about the topic and locating the appropriate images from magazines, newspapers, books, the Internet, or other sources. As a result of the pre-planning stage, participants arrived for the in-depth interview at an advanced stage of thinking, ready to discuss their opinions and impressions. Participants had to name each picture they brought in the interview by using a construct that described the equivalent competency they deemed important in their profession. During the one-to-one, one hour, interviews, training professionals talked through the pictures by using metaphors to describe the competencies that were important in effectively performing their jobs. Metaphors facilitated bringing unconscious feelings and thoughts to a level of awareness, where both parties, interviewee and interviewer, could examine them more openly together. Occasionally, the interviewer used probing techniques to explore in-depth key ideas. During the interviews, several participants noted that they did not previously (or consciously) know the answers to some questions and that the use of metaphors and probing techniques helped elicit deeper responses. In effect, participants felt that they were discovering hidden thoughts and opinions that they did not know were existent before the interview.

Analysis of data included a coding process aiming to identify the key meanings the participants were trying to express. Researchers then identified aspects of a participant's meanings collected in interviews and, consequently, identified constructs from these interviews as well as links between constructs. Linking constructs together more fully captures the meanings represented. Meaning was largely given in the links between concepts.

In coding, researchers tried to capture two broad types of associations, or linkages. One important link was the causal connection between two concepts. The second link was a simple association between two concepts. Some concepts were associated with each other, but not necessarily in a causal manner. Hence, in order to understand the association among constructs that a particular group of training professionals held, a consensus map was developed (see Figure 1).

Atlas ti, software, version 5, was used in creating the consensus map for the training professionals' competencies. This software made it possible to display key concepts and the causal or association linkages between them in a better and more comprehensive way, and visual manner (see Figure 1).

Insert Table I

ANALYSIS

Study results indicated the high diversity of training professionals' competencies and qualities as well as the rapid change of the training techniques and training material. This research elicited several competencies required for effective training managers, including; (1) teamwork, (2) inspiration-motivation, (3) creativity, (4) mentoring, (5) keeping current, (6) pro-activeness, (7) active listening, (8) staying healthy, (9) training measurement, (10) consistency and (11) love and passion for the profession (Figure 1).

Table II illustrates the different competency themes as they were discussed by position. As this table shows, teamwork and love/passion were the most noted themes in this study. The most recurrent theme for management was love/passion for their profession, followed by creativity and mentoring. Training coordinators' most noted theme was teamwork, followed by inspiration-motivation and creativity. This is important as Sandwith (1993) noted that leadership competencies most often contained themes of teamwork, love and passion for one's work, inspiration/motivation and mentoring. Conceptual competencies, including creativity and pro-activeness, were the second most noted themes. Finally, technical competencies, including training measurement and keeping current, ranked third and interpersonal competencies (such as active listening) were noted least frequently. Staying healthy could not be categorized under any set of competencies due to its unique nature.

Insert Table II

Teamwork

The majority of participants from the soon to be opened property emphasized the concept of teamwork. In several pictures, teamwork was represented by a puzzle, where putting together every single piece was vital for its completion (see Appendix I). More metaphors such as a group of athletes holding together the torch of victory, and a human pyramid illustrated the importance of teamwork and its vitality for the success of the organization. The training and development department not only interacted effectively among its members but also with the rest of the organization's departments. Since it is the training professionals' role to nurture and promote, it was logical that trainers saw themselves as ambassadors of the teamwork ideal to the rest of the organization's employees.

Inspiration-Motivation

Trainees often exhibit resistance during the training process. Several reasons, including boring training materials and long hours of training, justified this behavior. Employees, like most people, are also resistant to change and training is often viewed as a means that promotes change. Employees often perceive training with skepticism because they have the false impression that they need to attend a training session to fix something. To overcome these negative perceptions training professionals noted that they had to be able to motivate and inspire their trainees. They also noted that it was important to instill confidence in trainees, one way to do that was to feel confident themselves.

There is a difference between training adults and children. Adults need more motivation in order to learn effectively. Trainers have to provide trainees with good reasons on why

they need training. Motivation might be economic, e.g., personal development that could lead to promotion and/or higher compensation, or just personal satisfaction by simply learning and educating oneself.

Creativity

Creativity was another means participants suggested for breaking training resistance. Creativity was expressed in a picture by tapping, coloring, and pasting and was connected to fun and humor that are contagious. For example, trainers sharing personal stories and satirizing personal mistakes was a good method to make trainees feel comfortable, challenge their attention, and improve training performance.

According to a division-training manager, creativity is increasingly important when the department has a strict budget for training, as most do today. A picture that was selected to represent this concept was desert scenery, wherein plants had to be creative for their survival.

Mentoring

The importance of mentoring was noted because many training professionals, especially those from the human resources departments, were responsible for the development of the human capital. This department mentors employees to become better individuals in order to enable them to perform effectively and be able to advance in the hierarchy of the organization—since in this organization development of internal employees was central to succession planning.

Keeping Current

Designing and facilities training are both the responsibility of training professionals. Each noted that research, normally conducted through the internet, bookstores, and libraries, was an integral part of their responsibilities. Division/department training managers felt that it was particularly important to remain current to provide employees and their employer with a competitive edge (e.g. the training manager of the food and beverage department must be informed on the new trends in the food and beverage discipline).

Pro-activeness

All ten interviewees agreed that there was a change taking place in the hospitality environment. Each noted that customers' expectations had changed, leading to a vital need for better skills for hotel employees. These participants noted the importance of being proactive to stay one step ahead of their customers' needs and competition.

Products have also changed accordingly to the customers' needs. For example, casino slot games formerly used to accept or pay-out in money or tokens. Today, most issue paper receipts which can then be exchanged for money at ATM-like machines, thus reducing the number of needed employees. Because of this change all employees that were dealing with slots had to be re-trained according to those changes.

Participants also noted how technology had brought big changes in training. As a result of technology, for instance, training sessions had become more fun and less boring since trainers can now integrate movies, sound and many other technological advances in their training sessions. This is particularly useful in online training, used more frequently today. A training coordinator very characteristically said: “because of these changes the training department had become more of a learning facilitator and less of lecturer.”

Active listening

One of the themes that arose was to “Listen with your heart and without interrupting the person that speaks. Only then you can give good advice.” Division-training managers talked about the importance of being a good listener and actively listening to the problems of their department. Characteristically, the one labeled herself as the consciousness of her division. She noted: “I try to give good advice when I am asked for... I try to remain fair and try to find what is better for the specific situation for everyone.”

Staying healthy

“An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Staying healthy was portrayed by an apple. When coming to work, having a healthy mind, body, and spirit were noted as important elements for productivity. Maintaining a healthy and happy lifestyle could contribute in staying healthy. Moreover, people that came to work sick were considered ethically

immoral because they were potentially spreading their illness to others. However, the alternative to staying at home, especially on peak days, was not considered an option.

Measurement

One female training manager stated: “Inspect what you expect.” This statement focused on her belief that it was important to measure the effectiveness of training in order to evaluate training practices. There were several ways to evaluate training. The rate of internal promotions, retention rate, employee turnover, productivity and customer satisfaction surveys where wait time and friendliness were measured all are good ways to evaluate training. According to a food and beverage division training manager observation was also a valuable tool, especially in cases where employees perform work that involves physical activities which can be observed both before and after training (pre and post evaluation).

Consistency

All participants reported that training was imperative for acquiring the necessary skills for the job. Participants noted that legendary service means providing a unique and consistent service. Consistency in service was noted as the key element to acquiring and maintaining a good reputation for the hotel. Furthermore, training educates employees in the philosophy and goals of the company and in the mission statement that helps the employees in all-decision making. All noted that it is important for the training professional to align the employees’ personal goals with the organization’s goals.

Participants noted that training professionals had to be effective in their effort. An efficient method of accomplishing effectiveness in training was to adjust training to the participants' learning styles. Some people have the ability to be very good auditory learners, some good visual learners, others good tactile learners and some all three styles of learning. Participants believed it was imperative that training sessions incorporated all three learning styles in order to deliver an effective training session for everyone.

Love for their job

The majority of participants agreed that they loved their jobs and that they frequently felt excitement about going to work. Thus training managers expressed the passion that they felt about their jobs and about helping others to develop. Moreover, they felt that they were learning from their trainees at the same time they were teaching them. One noted: "I love it when I am in training and I am supposed to be the trainer teaching them their job; something new and I end up learning something from them. I am glad when I can take something from the class; we all love to learn new things."

Insert Figure 1

Consensus Map-Training Professionals Competencies

Summary and Conclusion

The training professionals' role is important because trainers develop the workforce and offer employees career opportunities for advancement at the same time they help decrease the rate of turnover and personnel costs. Moreover, development is a powerful tool for fostering an environment that will attract talented employees. The company that trains and develops its human capital has a reputation for valuing its employees and, consequently, increases the quantity and quality of the pool of candidates.

Training professionals agreed that their role is shifting from being a provider of training to becoming a facilitator of learning. These participants all noted the importance of promoting, guiding, enabling and supporting learning as the focus of their activities in order to achieve learning organizations that reinvent not just their organization but also their industry.

Training techniques and materials are changing rapidly. Technology, change in demographics, and even terrorism (although not discussed in this study) were some of the reasons for those changes. E-learning has substantially substituted traditional in-house training because the trainee can attend training seminars online from any convenient place equipped with a computer and a link to the Internet. Moreover, changing demographics and workforce characteristics means adjusting with the new attitudes, cultures, values and motivation of the diverse workforce. Finally, security training has become much more important, especially after the September 11, 2001 bombing of the New York World Trade Centers.

It appears from the study that there are several qualities an effective training professional should possess in today's hospitality industry. These include:

- (1) Teamwork. We believe that this concept was especially important for training professionals that work under pressure and they need the collegiality and the team spirit to overcome the significant pressure of the opening of a new property. They must “walk the talk” as they perceive themselves as the ambassadors of teamwork to the rest of the company's employees.
- (2) Inspiration and motivation. These are the means to overcome resistance during training and to deliver satisfactory training outcomes. Motivation can be the possibility of a promotion that could result in higher compensation or simply the personal satisfaction that one gains from learning.
- (3) Creativity was another characteristic that contributed in the successful delivery of training. Training professionals noted that they had to be creative in their training practices in order to increase trainee acceptance. Sharing personal stories, using humor and creating a fun environment were ways to make participants feel comfortable and interested during the training session. Most noted that this is particularly important at a time when they were facing severe departmental budget cuts.
- (4) Mentoring was essential to succession planning of the company. Coaching and nurturing employees to be individuals helps prepare people for more important roles.

- (5) Keeping current. Training professionals often are responsible for the design of training sessions. Therefore, they need to develop research and analytical skills for novel and updated training design, material and delivery methods.
- (6) Being proactive was suggested as the best approach to adapting to technological changes, customers' increasing demands, and to new training expectations. Being proactive signified forecasting the trends of the market, and trying to keep ahead of the competition.
- (7) Active listening. The nature of the training professionals' occupation is that they are interacting with lots of different types of people. Being a good listener makes trainers much more effective. Research in leadership has demonstrated that communication skills were perhaps the most important skills for effective leadership supports findings.
- (8) Staying healthy is the proactive solution to effectively negotiating the increased demands of training profession, especially during peak seasons. The alternative of going to work sick was not considered as an alternative as it was ethically challenged.
- (9) Measuring and evaluating training outcomes justifies the colloquialisms "you cannot manage something unless you measure it," and "inspect what you expect." Thus, the use of historical data, data collected from observation, and surveys can provide the training and development department with feed-back needed to improve its performance. It is interesting to note that measurement skills are advanced competencies that might be present only in training professionals with a graduate degree.

(10) Consistency in training was required for providing customers with great service.

Therefore, setting and applying uniform training standards and guidelines were important in achieving consistency in training.

11) Love and passion were noted as important characteristics of trainers by all participants. Therefore, enthusiasm is a necessary ingredient for promotability and success. Learning from the trainees can be unexpectedly rewarding for the trainers, because the dissemination of knowledge can work both ways.

DISCUSSION

Results of this study are parallel with four major management competency studies that used Sandwith's domains. Results indicate that leadership competencies are paramount in the training field. However, in the current study conceptual and technical skills are considered more important than interpersonal skills-in contrast to former research reports (Kay and Russette, 2000; Tas 1988; Tas et al., 1996; Okeiyin et al., 1994). Potentially, these differences are present because of the different departments under study. However, they may also be the result of digging deeper into the unconscious observations of trainers. The current study examined managerial and non-managerial training professionals from different departments (human resources, food and beverage and hotel operations) than previous studies which studied general managers, management and non-management employees in the food and beverage, hotel and sales departments (not

specifically training staff). Concepts such as pro-activeness, consistency, training measurement and staying healthy were newly introduced in the present study.

The findings of the current study have many similarities with the results of Rae's study on training competencies (2002). Both studies found that technological skills, people skills, creativity, effectiveness by using different ways of communicating information, humor and self-confidence were important competencies for training professionals. The results of this study were similar to those found by Leigh (2006) in that regard. Notably, both of these studies found that communication skills are important in effective training. Similarities were also found between these results and Gorman's opinions (Lalaguna, 2007), where good communication, enthusiasm and passion are significant ingredients to the success of training.

The magnitude and extent of this study were met by several constraints. The study was conducted in Las Vegas, Nevada, a tourist year-round destination with unique features and characteristics. The restriction was due to the location of respondents and the economic and practical feasibility of conducting this research. The sample for personal interviews included training professionals representing two hotel chains. Obviously, a study which included different market segments, small and medium sized hotels, for instance, as well as different sizes of properties, would provide a more complete image of the hospitality industry's perspective on training and development opinions and impressions. Therefore, this should be viewed as preliminary research and it is

recommended that future researchers utilize these results as a starting point to different types of properties as well as different participants in each.

This study will provide existing and future training professionals with information on the important competencies they should develop in order to improve training effectiveness.

Moreover, human resources management can use the competencies that resulted from this study as a guide for compiling competency-based job analyses for training positions, and consequently recruit and appraise training professionals based on these job specifications.

Finally, the outcome of the paper can be proven to be beneficial not only for hospitality executives, and future and current training professionals, but also for educators, both since training and teaching showcase many similarities and because informing college students who will become future managers helps to prepare them for their impending work environments. Being passionate, creative, having good communication skills, keeping current, measuring the outcome of training/teaching, and having passion and enthusiasm for their profession are equally important competencies for training professionals and educators.

It is noteworthy to state that staying healthy is not noted in the literature as an important ingredient of the effectiveness in the training profession. This perhaps can be attributed to the uniqueness of Las Vegas as a tourist destination, where hospitality providers operate 24/7, and the average occupancy rate for lodging is 90% all year around; hence, leaving no space for absences to the local hospitality industry employees.

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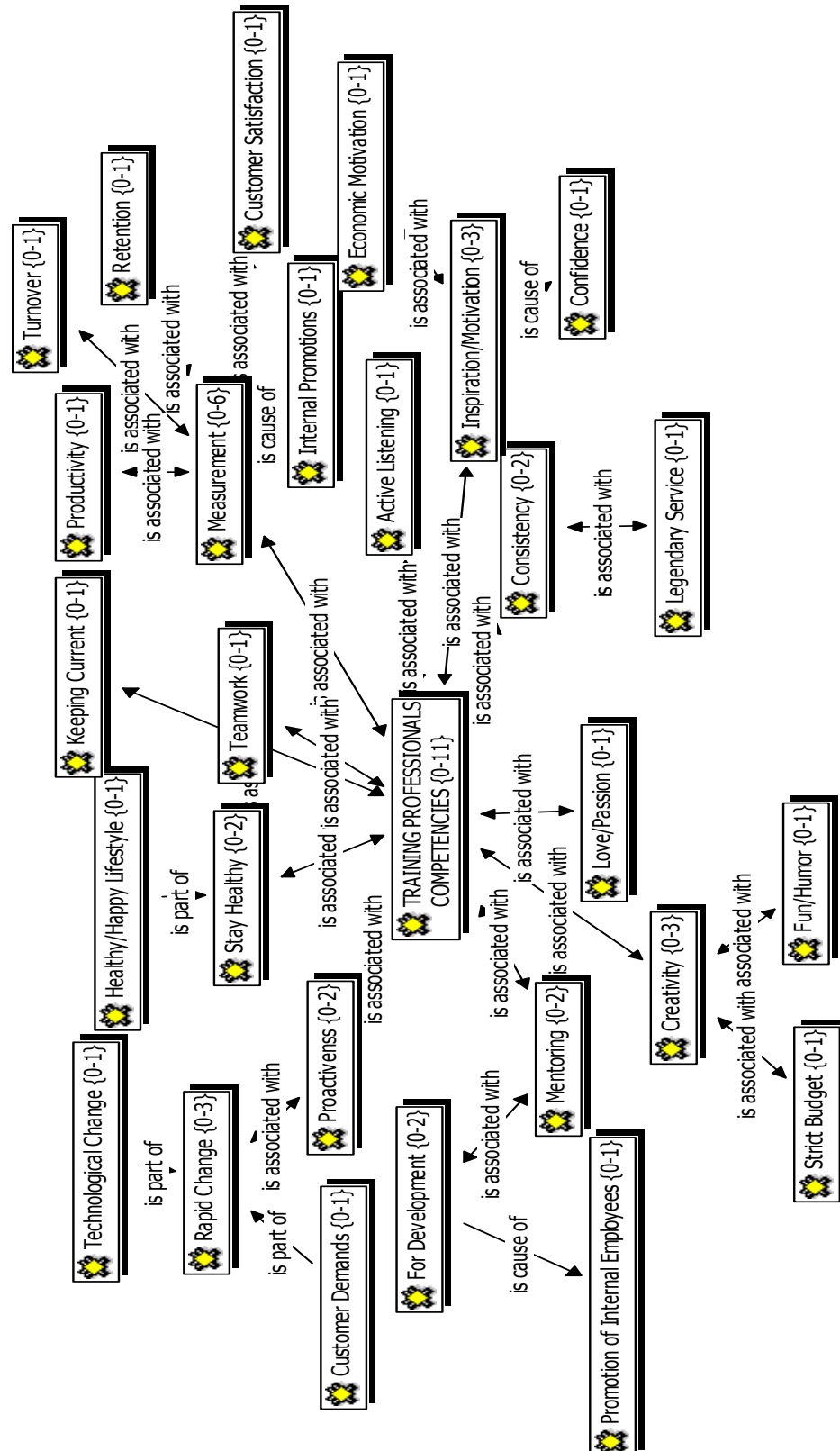
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Figure 1



Training Competencies	Sandwith Domain Comp.	Division	Training Managers	Training Coordinators	Total
Teamwork	Leadership	1		5	6
Love-Passion	Leadership	5		1	6
Inspiration-Motivation	Leadership	2		3	5
Creativity	Conceptual	3		2	5
Mentoring	Leadership	3		-	3
Proactiveness	Conceptual	2		-	2
Active listening	Interpersonal	2		-	2
Training measurement	Technical	1		1	2
Staying healthy	-	1		-	1
Keeping current	Technical	1		-	1
Consistency	Technical	-		1	1

Table II Training competency themes by position

Training Professionals Demographics				
Position	Department	Gender	Experience in Present Posit.	Experience in Training Experience in Hospitality
Division Training Manager	Hotel Ops	F	6 years	7 years
Division Training Manager	Housekeeping	F	2 years	2 years
Training Coordinator	Reservations	F	5 years	5 years
Division Training Manager	F&B	F	2.5 years	2.5 years
Division Training Manager	F&B	M	2 months	8 years
Training Manager	HR	M	6 years	10 years
Training Coordinator	HR	M	3 months	3 months
Training Coordinator	HR	F	3 months	3 months
Training Coordinator	HR	F	3 months	2 years
Training Coordinator	HR	F	3 months	3 years
				15 years
				7 years
				12 years
				9 years
				32 years
				31 years
				7 years
				3 months
				2 years
				4 years

Table 1 Training professionals demographics